



North Dakota House of Representatives

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COMMITTEES:

Judiciary
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Good Morning Chairman Elkin and Senate Education Committee Members,

For the record, my name is Claire Cory. I represent District 42 in Grand Forks, which includes the northwestern part of Grand Forks and expands out to include the Grand Forks Air Force Base. I am here as the prime sponsor seeking support of House Bill 1532.

House bill 1532 seeks to improve the way education works in North Dakota by respecting the right of parents to choose the best educational setting for their child. Currently, a parent is provided one of three options when educating their child; enroll their child in a public school, pay out of pocket for a private school, or educate the child through a homeschool program.

House Bill 1532 recognizes that not all of these choices are created equal, in terms of their burden upon a family. As such, House Bill 1532 seeks to facilitate parents' individual decisions by alleviating a portion of the financial costs required by parents who choose to educate their child in a nonpublic school. In these instances, the parent is forced to consider the financial burden, and this financial burden can be prohibitive.

In Grand Forks, private school tuition can reach \$7,000 a year, and for a family of four this could represent a \$14,000 expenditure, assuming 2 adults and 2 children. With our median family incomes in North Dakota, this would represent roughly 20% of their pretax income going to tuition. This is an incredible financial burden requiring substantial sacrifice; for a poorer family, it becomes ultimately impossible to afford.

As a result, the current system deprives families of making the choice of a nonpublic school. As many will testify before you today and as many have submitted written testimony, this sacrifice is simply not

possible and places an undue burden on the family. No family should be forced to choose between a school which does not fit their child's needs and paying the bills. This is the main reason why I and many of my colleagues introduced House Bill 1532.

Mechanically, this bill works as follows:

- When a parent enrolls their child in a nonpublic school, the school gives the parents a form requesting reimbursement for the cost of tuition.
- If the parent completes the form requesting the reimbursement, the school furthers that request to the Superintendent of Public Instruction.
- The Superintendent then issues a payment to the school for the cost of tuition
- The parent will see this as a credit on the invoice they receive from the nonpublic school their child attends.

Chairman Elkin and members of the Senate Education Committee, this concludes my testimony. I respectfully ask for a do pass recommendation from your committee. I am happy to stand for any questions.